SCRIPT BITS!
Issue: Sonic the Hedgehog #172 (FEB'07)
Lead Story Pages: 7-12
Back-up Story Pages: 1-4

Welcome one and all to **Script Bits!** This monthly feature will take roughly forty-five percent of a story in Archie Comic's *Sonic the Hedgehog* and present it to you as insight into the writing process.

Part of the fun of this feature will be comparing what was written and what saw print. Sometimes the vision is tweaked as the artists interpret the script. Sometimes the original idea doesn't work once put on paper and must be adjusted from there. Sometimes the artist has a stroke of genius and does something different than what the script calls for - and it's for the better!

So pull out your copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* #172 from February of 2007 and get ready to read along!

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Remembering "Truth of the Heart"

Fiona Fox – child prisoner, robot basis, treasure hunter, mercenary, Freedom Fighter, field medic, Brain Trust member, Sonic's girlfriend, traitor.

Take a look over that list again while I grab a drink. Quite the resume, isn't it? When I came onto the book Fiona was everything but that last identifier and, at first, could have remained a Freedom Fighter. The notion of her allegiances being questionable was always on the agenda.

Before writing *Sonic*, I wrote a fan-comic that paired Sonic and Fiona for novelty's sake. I found it rather fun that the pairing surfaced in the official comic years later and was tempted to re-explore the relationship. But the Fiona of *Sonic* was not the one I had essentially made-up for myself back in the day, so the dynamic was entirely different.

Part of the reason we took Fiona down the darker path was because we're severely short on female villains. Rouge is debatable and I think of her more as a anti-heroine than a villainess. The Iron Queen hasn't been seen since the "Hunt of Ixis Naugus" arc way back in STH#60. Lien-Da is part of Knuckles's sub-plot universe.

"Hero turned Villain" stories are always fun and Fiona had the best basis to work from. I had all this in mind when I planted the first seeds of doubt in "Birthday Bash!" (STH#160-161) A whole two-part storyline was going to be devoted to furthering the question, but that was eventually whittled down to STH#165's "Leak." It was about that

time that it was decided we wouldn't take the option to redeem her and set about preparing her heel-turn.

The deliberate hints popped up in "Comings and Goings" (STH#170) where Fiona was noticeably absent. It would be mentioned again the following issue and, coupled with the doubts sown months in advance, she was set up for the fall. I tried to revisit all those points and explain her reasoning throughout this issue, hitting on each point that had cropped up over the last twelve issues.

Regardless of all the reasoning and editorial boxes, there would still be that doubt in her villainy; hope within the reader's heart that this was all some elaborate ruse. I tried to stamp that out completely with how she treated Tails. If that didn't hammer home the notion that this was her big departure, I don't know what would!

This issue also gave us a moment to spend some time with Amy Rose, who keeps falling by the wayside despite my best intensions. Amy is a fun character to write because she's so lively. She has no "moderate" setting; she's all about the moment. She doesn't have the grace of Sally or the cunning of Fiona and I find that refreshing. She's still thoughtful and more than a sum of her emotional outbursts, but that unbridled passion – her presence on the page – is fun to play with.

While we were wrapping up a few things with Fiona's departure I wanted to set up a few things as well. The most blatant was Antoine at the end and his somewhat of a red herring lead-in to the proposal next issue. One less obvious element was Scourge's crisis of confidence during his duel with Sonic. The dichotomy of the heavy shadows and bright sunlight on page eleven should bring your attention to this moment. We're setting up something here.

Something far more subtle is the exchange between Sonic and Tails on page thirteen, especially the last panel. Take that moment into consideration when reading through "House of Cards" in STH#178-179. I think you'll find a whole new level of meaning to it, and yes, it was totally intentional. I'm only bragging a little.

<u>Easter Eggs</u>

- You'll note that the ring of smoke Amy's mallet makes on page one is heart-shaped.
- The stark use of lighting on page eleven was meant to underline just who the hero and the villain are here.
- Amy's comment on Fiona's jumpsuit is, admitably, a bit of self-insertion on my part. Don't be surprised if you see a change in her next appearance.
- Not an easter egg so much as trivia: the original title for this story was "Better Man"

<u>PAGE SEVEN</u>

PANEL 1 - Body shot of SCOURGE, shades set back on his head and giving SONIC (unseen) a cool, nasty smile.

SCOURGE
Hey babe.

You caught on to one thing, Sonic -
- it was me she fell for first.

PANEL 2 - FIONA saunters past a stony SONIC. SCROUGE continues to coolly mock.

FIONA
When I found out Scourge wasn't the real deal, I tried to find the same attraction in you, Sonic.

SCOURGE
I told her it was a waste of time.
Any guy after me is gonna be bland.

PANEL 3 - FIONA hang-lounges on SCOURGE's shoulder. SCOURGE wraps an arm around FIONA's waist and drops the shades down. SCOURGE gives (unseen) SONIC a wide smile.

FIONA
I was hoping you'd be just as fun, but you're hung-up on the whole "virtuous hero" thing.

SCOURGE
So much for your love-life, Blue.
You couldn't hold onto a princess*,
You couldn't win over my girl,
And Amy . . .

EDITO'S NOTE
*Princess Sally split with a slap in StH#152

PANEL 4 - Close-up on SONIC, who is smoldering.

SCOURGE (off-panel)
. . . heh, yeah, sure.
There's a real prize winner.

<u>PAGE EIGHT</u>

PANEL 1 - The tension is broken as TAILS lands between SCOURGE/FIONA and SONIC. Everyone is startled by TAILS's arrival. TAILS cries and pleads with FIONA.

TAILS
Fiona!
No!

PLEASE!

PANEL 2 - FIONA steps away from SCOURGE and looks honestly touched. TAILS blubbers, but looks FIONA in the eyes.

TAILS
I-I-It's okay if you don't want to like me -
I m-mean **"like me"**-like me -
B-But **please** don't go with Scourge!

PANEL 3 - FIONA kneels and sets one hand on TAILS's shoulder, the other on his cheek. TAILS stands rigidly, tears still running.

TAILS
I know you're good!
All you have to do is try a little harder and . . .!

FIONA
Oh Tails . . .
You're so smart, but you haven't learned one fundamental lesson in life . . .

PANEL 4 - Extreme close-up. FIONA bows her head and touches foreheads with TAILS. FIONA closes her eyes and smiles serenely. TAILS goes wide-eyed in horror.

FIONA
. . . you can't count on anybody.

PANEL 5 - FIONA slaps TAILS away. FIONA smiles quietly, cruelly. TAILS recoils and collapses - devastated. SONIC rushes up to him. SCOURGE cackles in the background.

SFX (impact flash of the slap)
SMACK!

SONIC (burst balloon)
TAILS!

<u>PAGE NINE</u>

PANEL 1 - SONIC pulls TAILS to his feet. SONIC is horrified. TAILS hangs his head, seemingly unresponsive.

SONIC
Tails?
Buddy?

TAILS
Sonic . . .

PANEL 2 - TAILS raises his face, red-rimmed eyes and tear-stained cheeks. TAILS sets his jaw resolutely.

TAILS
Just get 'em.

PANEL 3 - Aerial shot. SONIC rushes from top-right towards FIONA with a cold glare. FIONA cocks her hips and taunts.

FIONA
You're my prime example, or did you forget you left me imprisoned?*

SONIC
That's no excuse to do that to -

EDITOR'S NOTE
*Completely by accident, of course, as recalled in classic Knuckles #28

PANEL 4 - Same layout as last panel. SONIC's blue motion-track veers sharply to the left-top. SCOURGE (a green motion-track) bolts from bottom-right, impacts with SONIC, and follows/carries it to the left-top. FIONA turns her head to watch, her hair disheveled by the rush.

SFX (impact)
WHAM!

FIONA
Oh shut up already.

PAGE TEN

PANEL 1 - We're in front of the hedgehogs. The rest of the world blurs around us into the distance. SCOURGE has SONIC in a head-lock and is dragging SONIC along. SONIC struggles.

SCOURGE
Don't get me wrong, wuss.
As much as I like messin' with you, I think I actually **like** Fiona.

PANEL 2 - SCOURGE skids to a stop and throws out his arm, releasing SONIC. SONIC goes flying, still caught up in the momentum. SONIC flails as he goes flying towards a large rock.

SCOURGE
I mean, all the girls in my home dimension* are Dark from the get-go.
But Fiona . . .

EDITOR'S NOTE
*Scourge's own Zone was first seen in S#11

PANEL 3 - We're behind the rock. We see a ghostly shape of SONIC flip in mid-air. We see SONIC *fully* as he lands feet-first against the rock. SCOURGE stands nonchalantly in the background.

SCOURGE
. . . she **chooses** to be.
And that is **HOT!**

PANEL 4 - Same layout as last panel. SONIC launches/spin-dashes from the rock. The force of his attack shatters the top of the rock. SCOURGE hasn't moved.

SCOURGE
As for you
I've got you figured out.

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL 1 - SCOURGE leans to one side. SONIC (a spin-dash ball) goes flying past.

SCOURGE
I know why you hate me.

PANEL 2 - SONIC lies amid a jumble of splintered wood that used to be a tree. SONIC glares up at "us." SCOURGE's shadow falls over him.

SCOURGE (from off-panel)
And it's not just the Fiona thing,
Or that I'm better looking . . .

PANEL 3 - SCOURGE looms over "us," eclipsing the sun. SCOURGE is thrown in dramatic shadows and there is a flash of sun either off his head or the corner of his shades - whichever ends up looking best.

SCOURGE

. . . it's that all it would take is one **bad day**
And you'd be **just like me.**

PANEL 4 - SONIC kicks out at SCOURGE's legs. SCOURGE flails and begins to topple.

SONIC
No, that's not it, Scourge.

PANEL 5 - SONIC gets up and stands triumphantly over SCOURGE. Due to the reversed angle, SONIC is washed by brilliant sunlight. If we can, we see SCOURGE gasp and cower.

SONIC
It's because all it would take is a bit of **selflessness** . . .
A little bit of **decency** . . .
And you'd be **just like me.**

PANEL 6 - Close on SCOURGE, shades askew on his face. SCOURGE looks completely disarmed - even wounded - by these words.

SCOURGE
. . . I . . .

<u>PAGE TWELVE</u>

PANEL 1 - FIONA comes out of nowhere and round-house kicks SONIC in the shoulder. SONIC winces and bends with the blow, thrown from his feet.

FIONA
Back off, Sonic!
You had your chance!

PANEL 2 - FIONA advances on SONIC with a dark smile. SCOURGE gets to his feet, scowling as he adjusts his jacket. SONIC holds his shoulder and matches their looks.

FIONA
The way you hold back makes you **weak.**
It's all about survival of the best,
And you're -

PANEL 3 - AMY's mallet comes crashing down right in front of FIONA. FIONA staggers back a step. SCOURGE winces and ducks as TAILS buzzes him. SONIC looks up in surprise. AMY is furious - full of righteous anger.

AMY
Would you shut up already?!

PANEL 4 - SONIC smiles - impressed, relieved and surprised. TAILS and AMY stand before him, determined and protective.

TAILS
I-I can't hurt you, Fiona.
But I don't care about you, Scourge!

AMY
Which leaves the back-stabbing, heart-wrenching, ugly, stupid, dumb hairbow-wearing **traitor** to me!

Remembering "Worth the Effort"

One of the great things about *Sonic* is its solid line-up of strong female characters. Sally, despite her recent difficulties, has always been a competent and compassionate leader. Bunnie is just as big-hearted and has overcome what would be a disability and turned herself into one of the most powerful mobians on the planet.

Two others, however, I didn't feel like I had as firm an understanding. Amy Rose remained largely undeveloped. While her SegaSonic persona would be easy enough to emulate, I wasn't wholly satisfied with her being Sonic's stalker with a heart of gold. She didn't fit with the rest of the independent girls of the Freedom Fighters.

The other was Julie-Su. Her character was initially challenging for me to wrap my head around since she wasn't nearly as approachable as our other heroines. She has a hard-edge to her personality that's very intimidating. How do you show a character like that has a tender side without neutering their intimidation? It was a bit daunting approaching it.

So "Worth the Effort" was as much an exercise in character exploration for me as it was an addition to the comic's mythos. I had to make Amy's obsession work for me. How could someone so self-assured wrap their entire lives around someone else? I think I reached an explanation that I liked and works within the bounds of the SegaSonic canon.

This story was initially meant to be a character study of Amy Rose, but as I entered into it, I realized it was just as good a time to reflect on Julie-Su and present her clearly for our newer readers. I like to think the two acted as foils for one another so we got an idea of who they each were in as natural a way as possible.

With this story I think I've got a better understanding of the girls. Now the trick is finding the time and the stories to explore them further, push them in new directions, and to keep them growing.

Easter Eggs

- The scene in Julie-Su's recollections that show her and Knuckles on a dock is in reference to KTE#16 and "The First Date" from KTE#26-28
- Amy's pose on page seven / panel four harkens back to a piece of official art and was a nice touch by Tania del Rio

WORTH THE EFFORT

PGS: 8
D.O.S.:
CODE#:
C.C.:

PAGE ONE

PANEL ONE - Dawn over the GREAT FOREST. We see the top curve of FREEDOM HQ (see S#160-161).

PANEL TWO - The underground section of FREEDOM HQ. All the lamps are turned down low. JULIE-SU crosses through the community room. She passes behind a long couch, upon which VECTOR is reclined and loudly snoring, a remote control loosely held in his limp hand. She gives him an amused look.

PANEL THREE - We see AMY ROSE's dorm door. It's a plain wooden door. It's marked with a carved wooden heart painted red with "AMY ROSE" carved in loopy script on it. The script is painted. It has a carving of her Piko Piko Mallet lancing it like the arrow does in the classic valentines symbol. We see JULIE-SU's shadow on the door and we see her fist as she pounds on the door.

SFX (fist / door)
Bam! Bam!

PANEL FOUR - Largest panel of the page. JULIE-SU leans against the doorframe, arms crossed, smirking. AMY ROSE staggers out of her room, slumped and groggy. She rubs a fist into her eye and drags her mallet behind her. AMY takes the foreground. Titles to the bottom right of the panel, credits running along the bottom.

AMY
YAWN! (Exaggerated, arching text that breaks the edges of the balloon)
I'm up, I'm up.
Let's do it (yawn) to it.
NOTE: (yawn) is another exaggerated, balloon breaking word.
TITLE:
WORTH THE EFFORT

CREDITS

Writer: IAN "POTTO" FLYNN
Pencils:
Inks:
Colors:
Letters:

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE - JULIE-SU crosses right, one arm trailing behind her. She has AMY by the wrist and is dragging her along. AMY is pulled, barely awake. Comedic moment!

JULIE-SU
Come on, Amy.
You ought to be used to this hour by now!

AMY (wavering tail)
Uh-huh

PANEL TWO - GREAT FOREST, just outside the FREEDOM HQ. JULIE-SU is doing her morning stretches. She squats low, her leg closest to us fully extended, her other bent. Her hands are on her knees. She looks down her extended leg (away from AMY). AMY takes the background, the head of her mallet on the ground, the handle pointing up. Both her hands rest on the end to cushion her chin. She leans precariously upon the mallet, dozing. The dawn light casts deep shadows and shades of gold and rose.

JULIE-SU
You're the one who came to me for personal training, remember?

AMY (wavering tail)
Uh-huh.

PANEL THREE - JULIE-SU takes up a brisk pace, running through the Great Forest. She's enjoying the chill morning air and the activity. AMY lags behind, mallet dragging behind her and making a furrow in the ground, frightening small animals out of the way.

JULIE-SU
You know the drill - -
- - once all around Knothole and back to Freedom HQ.

AMY (wavering tail)
Uh-huh

PANEL FOUR - We're behind JULIE-SU as she runs towards KNOTHOLE. We see the wide bridge leading across the river and into the city. She looks over her shoulder, smiling. The rising morning sun sets the ivory-colored buildings and bridge and they glow beautifully.

JULIE-SU
If that sight doesn't wake you up
Nothing wi- -

PANEL FIVE - Background: JULIE-SU stops a few feet on the bridge. She cups her hands to her mouth and shouts. Foreground: AMY runs directly for the river, still asleep, just about to hit the water.

JULIE-SU (burst balloon)
Amy Rose!
You're heading for the river! (Larger text)

AMY (wavering tail)
Uh-huh.

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE - JULIE-SU winces away, holding her hands up to a spray of water from off-panel. She grins broadly.

AMY (from off-panel, watery splash-looking balloon)
GAH!!! (large, bold, extended, blue highlights)

PANEL TWO - The riverbank. AMY sits hip-deep in the lake, her hair damp and hanging in her eyes. She scowls and attempts to blow her wet bangs out of her eyes. They flip up - barely - and drip. The mallet is half submerged in the water. AMY's knees are up, but the water preserves her modesty. We see JULIE-SU's hand reaching down, offering help.

JULIE-SU
'Morning, sunshine.

AMY
Uh-huh.

PANEL THREE - JULIE-SU has her back to us as she hauls AMY from the water, smirking. AMY lurches, soaked to the bone, and exclaims disbelievingingly.

JULIE-SU
There you go.

Now let's get back to running.

AMY
WHAT?!
I'm soaked!
Can't I change clothes first?

PANEL FOUR - JULIE-SU leads the way as she and AMY run across the bridge to the left. They are nearly cast into silhouettes by the morning sun as it rises over the forest canopy.

JULIE-SU
Do you think Robotnik would let you change your wardrobe?

AMY
Can't I at least change boots?

JULIE-SU
No!
Dry off by running.

AMY
But wet footwear is bad for your feet!

JULIE-SU
Oh cry me a riv- -

AMY
DON'T EVEN SAY IT!!!

<u>PAGE FOUR</u>

PANEL ONE - A training area just beyond the dome of the FREEDOM HQ. Numerous log-pegs are buried various heights in the ground. AMY's boot is visible in extreme foreground. JULIE-SU balances in mid-hop atop one of the pegs.

TEXT BOX
Hours later . . .

JULIE-SU
Come on, Amy . . .

PANEL TWO - JULIE-SU does a flip, doing a momentary handstand on a peg as she moves towards us. AMY lunges and swings her mallet down onto the peg JULIE-SU was just on. AMY bears her teeth, her eyes following JULIE-SU.

JULIE-SU

. . . you're faster than this!

AMY
Oh, I'll land a hit!

SFX (mallet / peg impact)
DONK!

PANEL THREE - Distant shot so we can see both girls. JULIE-SU bunny-hops away from us, her knees pulled up to her chest and arms spread wide. AMY teeters on tip-top on a peg and swings wide, horizontally, the head of her mallet going under JULIE-SU's boots.

JULIE-SU
Maybe a lucky shot, sure.

AMY
I'm getting better, darnit!

PANEL FOUR - Same camera position as the previous panel. AMY flails, spins and teeters as her spin and precarious stance nearly spill her over. JULIE-SU lands on a far peg in a crouch and looks over her shoulder at AMY.

AMY
YEEEP!

PANEL FIVE - JULIE-SU leaps towards the reader, the background lost to rush / motion lines and exciting colors.

JULIE-SU
You have to recover quickly!